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Cold weather to continue

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The cold weather is expected to persist over the weekend and into next week with widespread frost and temperatures plummeting to -9 °C in some parts of the country.

Forecasters from the Met Office are keeping a close eye on conditions for the big return to work with the risk of icy conditions in some areas as rain falls onto frozen surfaces on Monday.

At these times Met Office health forecasting services are at their most useful, helping people suffering from long term conditions such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) stay healthy and out of hospital.

During winter months, people with various health conditions are at increased risk of becoming unwell. The level of risk is strongly influenced by weather conditions, virus activity in the community and other factors. So far this winter almost 18,000 people have registered for the Healthy Outlook® scheme which is designed for COPD patients so that they can manage their condition more effectively.

Several health authorities are reporting additional strain on services as respiratory admissions climb to near-epidemic levels in many areas across the country. Met Office health forecasting has proved a great success for both patients and health authorities, helping reduce hospital admissions and bringing reassurance to patients who use the service.

Wayne Elliott, Head of Health Forecasting at the Met Office hopes many more patients will soon be able to benefit from these services. He said: "Around 30 Primary Care Trusts and Health Boards have taken the service this winter and we anticipate delivering our forecasts to even more patients through the season".

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